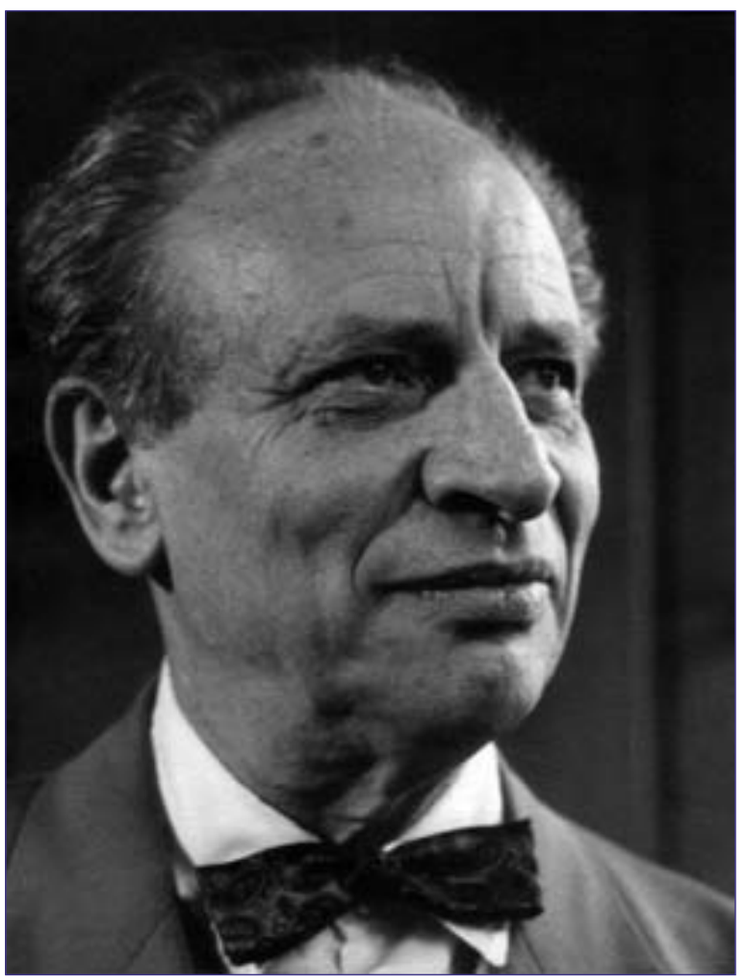
NAXOS

Kurt ROGER
(1895-1966)

Clarinet Quintet

Piano Sonata • Piano Trio • Variations on an Irish Air

Benjamin Frith, Piano • Robert Plane, Clarinet
Lucy Gould, Violin • Alice Neary, Cello • Emily Beynon, Flute
David Adams, Viola • Mia Cooper, Violin



Kurt Roger (1895-1966)

Clarinet Quintet · Piano Sonata · Piano Trio · Variations on an Irish Air

Kurt Roger was born in Austria on 3rd May 1895 to Viennese parents and studied in Vienna with Guido Adler, Karl Weigl, and in class with Arnold Schoenberg, although not following Schoenberg's twelve-tone system. He taught at the Vienna Conservatory from 1923 to 1938 and his works were receiving high-profile performances until the Nazi *Anschluss* forced his emigration to the United States via London. He became an American citizen in 1945 and held teaching positions in New York and Washington DC, lecturing at several universities and giving radio talks, notably on Bruckner and Mahler. His music has received many notable performances including those by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Rafael Kubelik, the Rochester Philharmonic under Erich Leinsdorf, the New York Chamber Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Northern Orchestra under Sir Charles Groves and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Jac van Steen.

From 1948 onwards Roger was invited back to Austria on lecture tours, whose venues included the Academy of Music in Vienna and the Mozarteum in Salzburg. In 1964 he accepted a guest professorship at Queen's University, Belfast, enabling the composer Raymond Warren to have a sabbatical. As Roger's wife was born in Ulster, this proved to be a happy coda to his life. In 1965 the Austrian government conferred on him the Order of Merit first class in the field of art and science. He died on 4th August 1966 on a visit to Vienna and was subsequently given a grave of honour there. His scores are preserved at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*.

Roger's musical style is a testament to the fascinating and changing musical atmosphere of which he was a part. His teacher Karl Weigl, a notable *Lieder* composer in the tradition of Wolf and Mahler, confirmed Roger's natural leanings towards lyricism, and from his other teacher, Schoenberg, he acquired a sense of formal construction and the ability to create complex motivic connections and dense polyphony. Whilst Roger could not be called a Modernist, and his style is indicative of Schoenberg's more Romantic early works, he nevertheless shared the Modernist's fascination with the past. As such, his works are often based on traditional or archaic forms enlivened by new combinations and adventurous harmony.

Many of these characteristics are found in Roger's ***Clarinet Quintet***, his last work, written shortly before his death in 1966. The general atmosphere is dark, poignant and nostalgic, though the modally inflected harmonies hint at a quasi-pastoral nature. In many similarly scored pieces the wind instrument takes on a soloistic rôle, but here, as in the Brahms *Clarinet Quintet*, it is fully integrated into the ensemble. Moreover, the clarinet's characteristic sonorous qualities make it especially suited to such integration; in its low register it blends with the rich colours of the viola and cello, and in the high register, matches the soaring melodies of the violins.

Integration is also fundamental to the motivic design, and the *Clarinet Quintet* demonstrates Roger's mature mastery of thematic unity. It is a motivically dense work, though no less emotionally moving for its complexity. Within each movement the motives are combined in an ornate web of polyphony, but they also have movement-spanning connections: the martial-like theme first heard in the cello at the opening of the first movement, returns in an altered form in the second movement, though here its nature is subdued by the slow tempo and legato counter-melody. This same counter-melody, with its characteristic falling seventh ending, finds its way into the *Finale*, as do hints of the martial theme.

Similarly rich in motivic associations is Roger's ***Piano Sonata***, written in New York in 1943. As with many of his works, the *Sonata* evokes a variety of old and the new styles, using Baroque, Romantic and

Modern elements in inventive combination. The first movement lives up to its anachronistic *Toccata* title in its display of manual dexterity, but the style is more lyrical than a traditional Toccata. The chief motivic element of the movement is the semitone interval: first heard in the listless opening theme, the rocking semitone figure gradually expands to a tone, then to staccato scales, before flowering into extended lyrical passages in an intense duet between the two hands. At a deeper level, the large scale ternary form also explores the semitonal relationship between F sharp minor and F minor. In the *Interlude* gently undulating chords, evocative of the first movement's rocking semitone, are juxtaposed with a deep, ominous bass figure. This colouristic effect, reminiscent of Debussy, gradually gives way to a section in which the bass and treble become more amalgamated. The Impressionistic atmosphere returns at the end, but here the firmly rooted tonality of A flat major gives a greater sense of tangibility. A similarly portentous bass to that of the *Interlude* opens the *Sonata's* final *Phantasmagoria* movement. The Phantasmagorical style, generally defined as a medley of shifting fantastical images, is evidenced in the striking contrast between the movement's *Agitato* and *Tranquillo* sections, which are in turn linked by material based on the semitone.

Roger was a man who felt emotions intensely; he was deeply moved by any instance of human suffering, but at the same time he lived for life's more jovial moments. Highly varied in mood and style, the three movements of the ***Piano Trio***, written in 1953, encompass an equally wide emotional range. The music shares an affinity with the Classical forms of the great Viennese masters but is nonetheless innovative with its free harmony and adventurous contrapuntal development.

Such counterpoint forms an important part of the first movement's construction: it is used at the opening where the lively E flat major theme is presented canonically through the three parts, but it also serves as a means of developmental intensification. The counterpoint at times lends an academic air, but this is dispelled in the tender second movement where a plaintive, quasi-improvisatory melody is taken up by each instrument in turn. The melody's wide intervals allow a particularly beautiful means of exploring the tone colours of each instrument. The final movement bursts onto the scene with a flurry of piano arpeggios moving across the instrument's range. The main theme is a cheeky, rustic melody in which F sharps jokingly interrupt the E flat major tonality. A series of light-hearted, developmental adventures ensues, but finally E flat major establishes itself more firmly and the movement merrily romps to a close.

Where the *Piano Trio* displays Roger's Classical Viennese roots, the ***Variations on an Irish Air***, composed in New York in 1948, bear witness in a nostalgic sense to his visit to Ireland in 1939 where he met his future wife while awaiting passage to the United States. This ancient Air is commonly known as *Down by the Salley Gardens* because of W. B. Yeats's inspired poem. The work opens with a haunting flute solo before the theme itself is introduced and explored in a set of twelve variations ranging from quiet introspection to virtuosic brilliance. The mastery of such a wide stylistic scope is noteworthy and there is immense beauty in the delicate interweaving of the instruments. Finally the ethereal voice of the solo flute returns and gradually fades away, bringing the work to a close.

This impressive variety in his treatment of thematic material is one of the many qualities which make Roger's music so interesting. His works are both traditional and forward looking; reflecting an affinity with the composers he most revered and yet retaining a strong sense of originality. At a time when many composers were asserting their 'newness' above all else, Roger's was a compositional voice that remained true to his own aesthetic calling.

Sonia Stevenson

Gould Piano Trio

Lucy Gould, Violin • Alice Neary, Cello • Benjamin Frith, Piano

From early success at the Charles Hennen in Holland and the inaugural Melbourne Competitions the Gould Piano Trio now boasts an impressive discography, with festival appearances at Edinburgh, Cheltenham, City of London, Bath, Aldeburgh, Spoleto and the BBC Proms. Regular and extensive tours to the United States have covered major venues in New York, including the Lincoln Center, Frick Collection and Weill Hall, and in Europe highlights have included the Queens Hall Edinburgh, Amsterdam Concertgebouw and the Brussels Palais des Beaux Arts, as well as recitals in Paris, Cologne, Athens and Vienna, and regular performances at London's Wigmore Hall. While playing most of the established master-works of the trio repertoire, they have done much to extend boundaries, challenging audiences with contemporary works, many of which they have commissioned. This current disc is part of an ongoing series for Naxos where the Gould Piano Trio, with clarinettist Robert Plane, have recorded chamber music by the late English Romantics Bax, Stanford and Ireland, for which they have been shortlisted for a Gramophone Award.

Lucy Gould

Lucy Gould founded the Gould Piano Trio whilst studying at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded the prestigious Queen's Commendation for Excellence. She has performed much of the concerto repertoire, including appearances with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Bournemouth Sinfonietta and the English String Orchestra. As an orchestral leader she has performed with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, BBC NOW, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra. She is a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, where she holds the position of Principal Second Violin. Following the success of the Gould Trio's Naxos recording of John Ireland's *Piano Trios*, Lucy Gould and pianist Benjamin Frith have recorded Ireland's *Violin Sonatas* for future release. She is a violin tutor at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and has given lessons and coaching in Europe as part of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe Academy.

Alice Neary

The cellist Alice Neary was the winner of the 1998 Pierre Fournier Award and has won major prizes in the 2001 Leonard Rose and 1997 Adam International Cello Competitions. She was also the winner of the String Section of the 1996 Royal Overseas League Competition and was awarded the Silver Medal in the 1994 Shell/LSO Competition. She made her Wigmore Hall début in January 1999 and has given recitals throughout Europe and the United States as well as concerto performances with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, European Union Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra of St John's. As artist-in-residence at the Presteigne Festival she gave premières of works by John McCabe, Huw Watkins and Michael Berkeley. She has recorded

Donald Tovey's *Cello Concerto* to considerable critical acclaim. As a member of the Gould Piano Trio she tours extensively worldwide and has recorded for Naxos, Quartz and Chandos. Educated at Chethams, she studied with Ralph Kirshbaum at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and with Timothy Eddy as a Fulbright Scholar at the State University of New York. She plays an Alessandro Gagliano cello of 1710.

Benjamin Frith

Benjamin Frith was encouraged by his teacher, Dame Fanny Waterman, to pursue a musical career after winning the British Dudley National Concerto Competition at fourteen. At twenty he became a Mozart Memorial Prize winner and was invited by Sir Peter Pears to appear at the Aldeburgh Festival. He achieved international recognition by sharing top prize in the 1986 Busoni and first prize in the 1989 Artur Rubinstein International Piano Competitions, making his début at the Edinburgh Festival in 1992 with an acclaimed interpretation of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*. He has given recitals and concerto performances worldwide with many leading orchestras and conductors including Mehta, Wit, Noseda and Vásáry. Frith's solo recording series for Naxos have included major explorations of the early Romantic period, (Mendelssohn and John Field) an area in which he is considered to have a speciality. The Warsaw Philharmonic have reinvited him to perform concertos by Hummel and Field as part of their Chopin 200th anniversary celebrations.

Robert Plane

Winner of the Royal Overseas League Competition and Principal Clarinet of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Robert Plane has appeared as soloist with the City of London Sinfonia, Northern Sinfonia, Ulster Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Sinfonietta and Zurich Chamber Orchestra in major concert halls across Europe from the Zurich Tonhalle to Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Música. He has recorded major works of the clarinet repertoire by Weber, Brahms and Messiaen and has a particular passion for British music, with his interpretations on disc of Finzi, Bax, Stanford, Howells and Ireland for Naxos winning a number of prestigious awards and nominations, including a shortlisting for a Gramophone Award, two Editor's Choice nominations, Classic CD's 'Best Concerto Recording' Award and a BBC Radio 3 'Building a Library' top recommendation (Finzi *Clarinet Concerto*). He performs with pianist Sophia Rahman and enjoys a close relationship with the Gould Piano Trio, together with which he founded and directs the Corbridge Chamber Music Festival in the northern English county of Northumberland.

Emily Beynon

Emily Beynon is principal flute of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam. Born in Wales, she began her musical education at the Royal College of Music (Junior Department) and then went on to study with William Bennett at the Royal Academy of Music and with Alain Marion in Paris. Equally at home in front of the orchestra as in its midst, she performs regularly as concerto soloist and is an avid chamber musician. She appears regularly on BBC Radio 3 and has made nine solo recordings. Also a passionate and dedicated teacher, she is frequently asked to give master-classes all over the world and in 2009, together with Suzanne Wolff, established the Netherlands Flute Academy (www.neflac.nl). She was made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 2002. For more information, please visit www.emilybeynon.com

David Adams

David Adams, formerly Leader of the Ulster Orchestra, is now Leader of the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and tutor in violin at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. He has been Co-Artistic Director of the Goldberg Ensemble since 2003, and was tutor in violin at the Royal Northern College of Music from 2000-2006. Equally at home on violin and viola he makes regular guest appearances with the Nash Ensemble, Endellion String Quartet, Gould Piano Trio and Hebrides Ensemble. He regularly attends the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove. In 2009 he recorded the Beethoven *String Quintets* with the Endellion Quartet for Warner Classics and appeared at the Wigmore Hall as part of the quartet's thirtieth anniversary celebrations. David Adams began his studies at the age of five with his father, Principal Viola in the Hallé Orchestra. He continued his training with Malcolm Layfield and in the United States with Zvi Zeitlin and Daniel Phillips. He plays a Betts viola c.1840 previously played by his father.

Mia Cooper

Mia Cooper lives in Dublin and since 2006 has been the leader of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. She also teaches violin and chamber music at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. She was a member of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra from 1999 to 2004, and is regularly invited as a guest leader of other orchestras. Mia Cooper has played and recorded a variety of chamber music with many of the United Kingdom and Ireland's chamber ensembles, and has appeared at venues and festivals across Britain, France, in Mumbai, and at the annual 'Land of the Disobedient' chamber music festival held in Lithuania.

Also available

8.555063

8.557698

Sir Charles Villiers
STANFORD
Clarinet Sonata
Piano Trio No. 3
Robert Plane, Clarinet • Gould Piano Trio
Mia Cooper, Violin • David Adams, Viola

8.570416

8.570507

NAXOS
ROGER: Chamber Music
8.572238

Born in Austria and active in Vienna until 1938 when he emigrated to the USA before returning to Europe after the Second World War, Kurt Roger combined traditional, even archaic musical forms, with the adventurous harmonies of late Romanticism. His *Clarinet Quintet*, like that of Brahms, is a beautifully conceived late work, while the *Variations on an Irish Air* recalls his visit to Ireland in 1939. The *Piano Trio* displays Roger's Classical Viennese roots and the *Piano Sonata* uses Baroque, Romantic and Modern elements in inventive combination.

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(1895-1966)

Chamber Music

	Quintet for Clarinet, Two Violins, Viola and Cello, Op. 116 [1]	**21:22**
1	Allegro moderato	8:21
2	Lento	7:49
3	Introduction and Rondo Finale (Con Spirito)	5:12
	Piano Sonata, Op. 43 [2]	**18:22**
4	Toccata: Allegro non tanto, ma appassionato	4:36
5	Interlude: Lento	4:11
6	Phantasmagoria: Molto sostenuto	9:34
	Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, Op. 77 [3]	**12:46**
7	Allegretto	5:38
8	Adagio	4:35
9	Allegro	2:34
10	**Variations on an Irish Air for Flute, Cello and Piano, Op. 58** [4]	**22:57**

Gould Piano Trio

Lucy Gould, Violin [1, 3, 4] • **Alice Neary, Cello** [1, 3, 4] • **Benjamin Frith, Piano** [2-4]

Robert Plane, Clarinet [1] • **Emily Beynon, Flute** [4]

David Adams, Viola [1] • **Mia Cooper, Violin** [1]

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